

Claims

1. A surgical instrument comprising an elongate hollow probe having an apertured region at its distal end portion, an elongate drive shaft disposed within the probe and mounted for rotation about its longitudinal axis within the probe, a cutting tool located at the distal end of the drive shaft and positioned adjacent to the apertured region, an electrosurgical device located at the distal end of the probe, a motor for rotating the drive shaft, and suction means for providing a source of suction at the apertured region for evacuating tissue debris removed by either the cutting tool or the electrosurgical device.
2. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 1, wherein the electrosurgical device is a bipolar electrosurgical device including at least one active electrode, at least one return electrode and an insulator for spacing and insulating the or each return electrode with respect to the or each active electrode.
3. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the apertured region is constituted by first and second apertures, the cutting tool being positioned to enable tissue to be cut by cutting means provided on the cutting tool, the cutting means being engageable with tissue through the first aperture, and the second aperture being positioned in the region of the electrosurgical device.
4. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 3, wherein the second aperture is positioned adjacent to the electrosurgical device.
5. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 3 or claim 4, further comprising means for selectively blocking communication between the first aperture and the suction means to allow the suction means to operate principally through the second aperture.

6. A surgical instrument as claimed in any one of claims 3 to 5, wherein the drive shaft is hollow, the cutting tool is hollow and contiguous therewith, and the distal end portion of the cutting tool is formed with a cut-out through which tissue debris can be evacuated when the cut-out is in alignment with the first aperture.

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7. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 5 or claim 6, wherein the blocking means is provided by the cutting tool being configured in such a manner that a portion thereof effectively blocks the first aperture when the cutting tool is in a predetermined rotational position.

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8. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 7, wherein an outer surface of the hollow cutting tool constitutes the means for effectively blocking the first aperture when the cutting tool is in said predetermined position.

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9. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 7 or claim 8, further comprising means for selectively positioning the cutting tool automatically in said predetermined position.

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10. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 5, wherein the blocking means comprises a baffle operable to block effectively the first aperture.

11. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 10, wherein the baffle is located on the exterior of the probe.

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12. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 10, where the baffle is located on the interior of the probe.

13. A surgical instrument as claimed in any one of claims 10 to 12, wherein the baffle is movable between a first position, in which it effectively blocks the first aperture, and a second position in which it is clear of the first aperture.

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14. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 13, wherein the baffle is rotatable about the longitudinal axis of the probe between the first and second positions.
15. A surgical instrument as claimed in any one of claims 10 to 14, wherein the baffle is manually movable between its first and second positions.
16. A surgical instrument as claimed in any one of claims 10 to 14, wherein a motor is provided to move the baffle between its first and second positions.
17. A surgical instrument as claimed in any one of claims 3 to 5, wherein the cutting tool is provided with an abrasive outer surface, the distal end portion of the probe being spaced from the abrasive outer surface to define an inlet through which tissue debris can pass.
18. A surgical instrument as claimed in claim 17 when appendant to claim 5, wherein the cutting tool is selectively movable longitudinally of the probe in order to provide the means for blocking communication between the first aperture and the suction means.
19. A surgical instrument as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein there is a single active electrode, and a single return electrode, and the active electrode, the insulator and the return electrode are formed with contiguous apertures in alignment with the second aperture.
20. A surgical instrument as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the drive shaft is solid and of a diameter less than that of the hollow probe so as to define a channel between the drive shaft and the hollow probe, tissue debris being removable via the channel.